

Political Machinery Draws Blame For Ke

By Ronald Blubaugh
Bee Staff Writer

To women's rights crusader Aileen Hernandez, California's "abysmal record" of women in politics is due largely to male control of the political machinery.

Speaking at a day-long hearing yesterday in the Capitol, Ms. Hernandez called on the legislature to move immediately toward implementation of Proposition 9, the political reform initiative. She said the new law, approved by the voters in June, will be a boon to women politicians.

"There is no greater barrier to the

participation of women in elective politics than the barrier of the excessive costs of conducting campaigns and the abuses to which we are prey because of this," she said.

"Party machinery and traditional campaign organizations do not endorse and support with adequate finances women who are candidates for office. Those who run and win usually do so against all odds their first time out.

"California has an abysmal record of women in politics—the number of successful women candidates at any

level is virtually infinitesimal."

She said there are only five women mayors in cities of 10,000 or more population, two women legislators, one member of Congress and one appellate court judge.

"The election year of 1972 brought substantial increases to almost every state in the Union in the number of women elected to office—not California," she said.

Ms. Hernandez, former national president of NOW, said the male ego has been a particular problem facing women in politics.

"We are not going to be limited in our struggle for equality by the fragility of men's egos," she said. "If it is that fragile, it is going to have to break."

She cautioned other women not to wait for men to give them the go-ahead.

"Women will not get power until they take it," she said.

Ms. Hernandez was one of a series of speakers at a hearing of the Joint Legislative Committee on Legal Equality. Sen. Mervyn Dymally, chairman of the committee, said that for

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thousands of minority women the "emphasis on equal employment opportunity appears to be an exercise in futility."

He said the "double stigma of race and sex" caused minority women to be the lowest paid of all California workers, with an average pay of less than \$700 per month before deductions. Statistics released by Dymally show that the unemployment rate for minority women workers was 10.5 per cent last year, almost double the 5.3 per cent for white women.

The twin prejudices of race and sex

were discussed by a number of the speakers. One of the speakers, Eleanor Spikes of Black Women Organized for Action, said minority women have to battle even harder than minority men. She said the problem is acute for minority women who are heads of households, something she said is much more likely for minorities than whites.

Dymally's committee is searching for sexually discriminatory laws for which changes will be recommended. It also is looking into the hiring and promotion practices of state agencies.

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